

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COLOMB 04463 301817Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-14 AGRE-00 (ISO) W
-----070024 011307Z /10/44

R 291010Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1507
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 4463

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, CE

SUBJ: 28 SEPT. STRIKE DAY PASSES WITHOUT INCIDENT

REF: COLOMBO 4391

1. SUMMARY: AS REPORTED REFTEL, BROAD FRONT OF TRADE UNIONS CALLED OFF PLANNED TOKEN STRIKE. NEVERTHELESS, GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED TIGHT SECURITY ON SEPT. 28. ARMED POLICE WERE CONSPICUOUS IN COLOMBO AND ARMY VOLUNTEERS WERE KEPT ON ALERT ALL DAY. NO INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED. END SUMMARY.

2. SPECULATION HERE CENTERS ON:

-- WHY THE TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP CALLED A STRIKE WHEN THEY DID NOT HAVE THE WORKERS' SUPPORT;
-- WHY THE GOVERNMENT REACTED SO STRONGLY AGAINST THE PROPOSED STRIKE.

TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP HERE IS NOT IN TOUCH WITH WORKER SENTIMENT. TRADITIONALLY, LEADERS CALL A STRIKE AND WORKERS RESPOND SINCE THEY HAVE ACCUMULATED GRIEVANCES AND LITTLE
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FAITH IN GOVERNMENT. WHILE THEY HAVE GRIEVANCES AT PRESENT, THE WORKERS HAVE EXPECTATIONS THAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT WILL PERFORM BETTER THAN PAST REGIMES AND ARE WILLING TO WAIT.

3. SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENT OVER-REACTED; THAT STRIKE WOULD HAVE BEEN A DISMAL FAILURE EVEN IF GOVERNMENT HAD DONE NOTHING. HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE BEEN DEMON-

STRATING TOUGHNESS FOR THE BENEFIT OF FOREIGN INVESTORS. IT MAY ALSO HAVE FOSTERED CONFRONTATION AS EXCUSE TO PASS NEEDED LABOR LAWS. PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL SEEK LEGISLATIONS REQUIRNG A MAJORITY VOTE OF UNION MEMBERSHIP IN SECRET BALLOT BEFORE STRIKE CAN BE CALLED. VOTING WOULD BE SUPERVISED BY MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIALS.

4. UNION LEADERS AFFILIATED WITH LEFT POLITICAL PARTIES CONDEMN PROPOSED LEGISLATION AS REPRESSION OF LABOR. PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESSMEN WELCOME IT AS A GUARANTEE OF LABOR STABILITY. WORKERS REACTION UNKNOWN.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Remarks:
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